

1870 + Lincoln Society + 1890

BY THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR.



HOW quickly have the western prairies been dotted with populous cities, and how rapidly have these cities, rising like magic from the earth, assumed the form and character of the great centers of population in the far east, whose culture and refinement of today are distilled from centuries of luxurious ease! Here we have no history and our past does not extend beyond the memory of living men; yet those refinements of society which are supposed to come only from age, are here found, ready made, as it were. We enjoy the same privileges in our young city which in the older cities of the east it has taken generations to produce. There social advantages were created; here we have them transplanted, being saved the delay of growth.

The brilliant rays of the brightly burning lamp of the present confuse the sight, and one who moves in Lincoln society in this joyous month of December, 1890, when the "season" with all the gayeties and countless pleasures which that magic word implies, is at its merriest, can hardly look back down the avenues of the past far enough to see the time—only a short while ago—when in place of the delights of society of today, the inhabitants of the young capital city found their only amusement and recreation in an occasional old fashioned gathering at the rude abode of one of the "early settlers," where social converse constituted the sole entertainment.

The evolution of the last two decades has transformed the social life of the frontier town from a provincial, whole souled friendliness to the cultured and refined society of the modern city. It is indeed difficult to realize that the state capitol whose walls even yet echo the music and joy of the recent harp ball, stands where only a few years ago the antelope grazed in the tall grass of the prairies; that in place of the bowling carriages with their precious human freight passing and repassing in the paved streets, the Indian and the western emigrant but a short time since followed the lonely trail in the direction of the setting sun; that the splendid homes of comfort and luxury with which the city abounds are erected on the spots where but recently were pitched the settlers' tents. The transformation effected in twenty years suggests the marvels in the Arabian Nights.

Perhaps, if before we turn the leaf of '91, disclosing the pleasures of the new year, we look back over the pages already turned and dimmed, we may better appreciate the glowing promises and bright prospects of the new leaf in the social calendar.

Twenty years ago card playing was not general. Progressive euchre was as yet an unrevealed fad of the future, and high five and razzle-dazzle, so dear to the heart of the modern card enthusiast, had not been dreamed of. And the facilities for dancing of the young and at that time (comparatively) wild western town were very meagre; consequently there was very little social activity. There were, however, a few mansions in the pioneer days whose owners were wont to entertain on occasion small gatherings of friends which, without those incidental amusements so common today, were perhaps none the less agreeable. In those days the latest arrival was hail fellow well met with the oldest settler and what was lacking in ceremony was made up in perfect good will and universal friendliness.

Many of those who are now "in the swim" can recall the old-time assemblies in the ancient Tichenor house, which was at that time a leading hotel and the greatest political rendezvous in the state, occupying a position somewhat similar to that now held by the Capital. This building is still standing at Thirteenth and K streets. Early in the seventies there were some memorable gatherings in the Townley house, lately removed from M street, near Thirteenth, and the Atwood mansion, which stood on the site of the present State Journal building. At the former, about 1873, there was a notable entertainment at which A. C. Ziemer and Charley

Smalls, then B. & M. ticket agent, furnished the amusement. These gentlemen operated a telegraph line from one room to another for the benefit of fond maidens and devoted youths, who kept the wire burdened with tender messages all the evening.

Nebraska City and Lincoln were united by a close bond of friendship in those days and the young people of the two towns saw a great deal of each other. Some of the trips to Nebraska City will be long remembered.

When the city was young game was plentiful and sportsmen could oftentimes fill their bags within a stone's throw of their own door steps. It hasn't been many years since A. C. Ziemer shot a wolf where the Rice well is now located. Ducks were hunted in the spring and fall in the locality of the present site of the vitrified paving brick works and Lowery's mill.

Lincoln has boasted an "opera house" so long that the memory of the oldest inhabitant runneth not to the contrary. Dramatic performances were given in the Academy of Music at Eleventh and C streets; but Hallo's opera house was the most popular resort until it was rebuilt as the Centennial. Even

class but a fair representation of those whose social position, long since determined, entitles them to lead in the affairs of the gay world.

To R. H. Oakley probably belongs the honor of giving the club its name. He was present at its first meeting and at his suggestion it was dubbed the "Pleasant Hour" club. There is some dispute as to the exact date of the club's origin, the official records only extending back to 1883, but as near as can be ascertained it was organized in October, 1874, at a meeting held in H. J. Walsh's office. J. O. West, now of Grand Island, was elected president, and R. H. Oakley, vice president. The next year West was succeeded by Oakley, and then W. P. Farwell was made the executive. The latter died during his tenure of office, the unexpired term being completed by O. W. Webster. After Webster the following gentlemen were honored by election to the presidency of the club: J. D. McFarland, Thomas Ewing, Charles M. Carter, (now of Columbus, Ohio), Gordon H. Frinke, (deceased) and J. W. Irwin. This brings the record down to 1883, when for technical reasons the original constitution was re-adopted with some modifications, and the following officers were elected: president, C. M. Carter; vice president, Frank C. Zehrung; secretary, D. C. Van Duyn; treasurer, R. C. Outcalt; executive committee: C. E. Magoon, R. H. Townley, and C. S. Lippincott; master of ceremonies, W. A. Green. During the season of 1884-5 W. A. Green was president and he was succeeded in 1885-6 by Frank C. Zehrung, in 1886-7 by A. G. Beeson, in 1887-8 by H. P. Foster, in 1888-9 by C. S. Lippincott, in 1889-90 by W. E. Hardy, who was followed by C. E. Magoon, the present

R. Horton, O. R. Oakley, J. R. Harvey, M. H. Tilton, Victor White, David Baum, Dr. Summer, Mason Gregg, A. B. Law, F. W. A. Kind, J. E. Thompson, C. Randall, Fred Webster, J. M. Kruse, B. Trickey, Geo. Cook, E. E. Barton, W. B. McArthur, Geo. Kingsley, J. H. W. Hawkins, J. H. McMurtry, J. R. Lemist, H. A. Burkhardt, W. C. Davis, W. G. Durrell, F. McClusky, Frank Gregg, Geo. Foreman, C. T. Brown, W. E. Stewart, W. A. Green.

1887—E. R. Smith, W. H. Hoffman, H. R. Wiley, A. S. Badger, John Higginbotham, E. B. Green, W. P. Heiskell, C. R. Richter, A. H. Cunningham, L. M. Taylor, J. E. Douglass, Myron Wheeler, K. K. Hayden.

1888—E. E. Henkle, Frank Smith, T. W. Griffith, C. G. Dawes, C. E. Waite, H. C. Nutt, Jr., Otto Mohrenstecker, H. K. Kernman, C. B. Manning, W. H. Brevoort, Dr. Giffen, C. S. Mullen, Geo. Holden.

1889—R. Rehlander, Dr. F. D. Crim, F. C. Sholes, H. J. Hall, Geo. McArthur, J. W. Maxwell, Henry Mansfield, C. J. Templeton, Dr. W. C. Reeves, H. R. Nissley, Dr. C. E. Spahr, M. I. Aitken, Dr. R. C. Trodgen, G. C. St. John, S. T. St. John.

1890—Dr. C. F. Ladd, E. E. Henkle, R. S. McIntosh, W. J. Dennis, John T. West, Wing Allen, George Harper, O. A. Olmstead, Harry Krug, W. Morton Smith, H. B. Clarkson, William Johnson and George Covert.

The oldest consecutive member of the club is Frank Zehrung, who joined fifteen years ago. For seven years he was the youngest member. In the very early days the leading spirits were Frank L. Sheldon, L. C. Richards, J. A. Buckstaff, George A. Spencer, W. P. Farwell, D. D. Muir, L. C. Dunn, Ed Kdight (now residing in the east), R. H. Oakley, Frank C. Zehrung, O. W. Webster, C. M. Carter, C. G. Caldwell, J. M. Irwin (now of Quincy, Ill.), H. J. Walsh, J. D. MacFarland, G. M. Lambertson, Thomas Ewing, B. F. Cobb, N. C. Abbott, J. J. Deck, Dr. F. G. Fuller (deceased), J. H. Alford, J. O. West, Col. J. N. Townley (deceased), S. S. Brock (deceased), J. H. McMurtry, Carl Funke, J. M. Ferguson, A. G. Beeson, R. C. Outcalt, W. M. Cole, George B. Harris and a few others, whose names are not now recalled. The parties were held in the Academy of Music the first few years, afterward in the city hall opposite the postoffice, and later in Temple hall. Good form in the early days did not demand full dress at the Pleasant Hour assemblies, and the parties were marked by the entire absence of formality that inevitably follows the introduction of the claw hammer, carriages and flowers. For a long time the town boasted only one "hack" and everybody walked. Cutaways and Prince Alberts and the usual indoor feminine apparel constituted "full dress." A new era dawned ten or twelve years ago, when G. W. Fawell broke the ice and appeared in a spick and span swallow-tail. His example was followed by a few of the bravest among the men, but it took some time before the wearers of these dress suits overcame the feeling of sheepishness which accompanies most unusual acts of this nature. Then custom demanded carriages and the Pleasant Hour parties gradually became more and more elaborate until the present condition of affairs was reached.

Sometimes there were as many as a hundred members and occasionally the number dropped to thirty or forty. At one time a party was given at which only five couples were present. Among the notable assemblies under the auspices of the club may be mentioned the ball opening the east wing of the state capitol, which was an event of peculiar importance at the time. The custom of giving a reception to newly married members has been observed almost from the foundation of the club and these receptions have always been delightful occasions. A number of very successful calico and leap year parties have also been given. The events of the present season are still fresh in the memory of readers of THE COURIER and do not call for further comment at this time.

The Pleasant Hour Junior club, organized in 1887, composed, as might be inferred from its name, of the younger members of society divided honors for a time with its namesake, and until it merged with the latter, at the commencement of the present season, had a brilliant and highly successful career.

At a preliminary meeting held October 20, 1887, at which C. J. Templeton was chairman, a temporary organization was effected, with the following officers: President, J. W. Maxwell; vice president, E. E. Edwards; secretary and treasurer, Oscar F. Funke. At the second meeting, held October 24, a constitution was adopted and the following officers were elected to serve the ensuing year: President, Fred W. Houck; vice president, Frank L. Hathaway; secretary, Oscar F. Funke; treasurer, J. W. Maxwell; master of ceremonies, E. E. Edwards. The signers of the constitution were: F. W. Houck, Frank Hathaway, Oscar F. Funke, J. W. Maxwell, E. E. Edwards, Lou S. Storrs, Stout, C. J. Templeton, Baum, G. Smith, Robert Muir, Young, McClay, Will Hammond, McConiff,



WINTER.

as far back as fifteen years ago strong attractions were common and society always turned out en masse when there was a "show" in town. John McCullough, Mary Anderson, the Florences, Janaschek and Emma Abbott were among the eminent stars who were seen here over a decade ago. Richard Golden, Pauline Hall and Jessie Bartlett Davis were seen with Carleton before their reputations were made, and Marie Jansen and Francis Wilson also appeared here in the years ago. "Chow Chow," as given by Adah Richmond in the Academy of Music, was a strong favorite with Lincoln players and William Gill's "Our Goblins" of fifteen years ago was a great event. Kate Claxton, who has assisted at the burning of so many theatres, was playing in the "Two Orphans" at Hallo's fifteen seasons ago, when the theatre was partially destroyed by fire.

The early governors were little given to entertainments; but a number of receptions were given in the old capitol, and the chancellor's receptions were also leading events but a few years since.

Society proper has, for the past sixteen years, been largely represented by the Pleasant Hour club, probably the oldest social organization in the state. For an association dependent for perpetuation upon an annual reorganization to remain intact for more than a decade and a half is something very unusual. The Pleasant Hour club has enjoyed a peculiar prosperity. Starting in a modest way it has widened and broadened with time until it is now one of the most solidly established institutions of its kind to be found anywhere in the west. It stands for the active leading element in society, and its membership includes not only the younger

incumbent.

At the time of the reorganization of the club, September 24, the membership was as follows: J. N. Townley, L. C. Richards, C. W. Mosher, N. C. Brock, J. L. Osborn, J. A. Buckstaff, C. C. Burr, R. Mahoney, C. D. Hagerman, H. Whitmore, F. McCluskey, A. W. Jansen, C. E. Chute, N. C. Abbott, Dr. Fuller, H. P. Foster, J. E. Reed, Charles Millar, D. D. Muir, W. E. Stewart, F. Wingate, B. F. Cobb, G. M. Lambertson, J. D. MacFarland, C. F. Damrow, C. H. Imhoff, E. S. Roose, T. H. Benton, William Stull, R. D. Silver, Jr., R. C. Outcalt, J. E. Baum, Ed Gerrans, H. J. Walsh, F. M. Hall and Ed Mitchell. A. W. Field, A. G. Beeson, W. M. Leonard, F. L. Sheldon, Frank C. Zehrung, R. H. Townley, A. C. Parrott, D. C. Van Duyn, E. P. Ewing, J. B. Wright, E. H. Andrus, C. M. Carter, C. S. Lippincott, W. A. Green, T. Ewing, C. E. Magoon, R. H. Oakley. The following additions were made to the membership up to January 1, 1886: R. D. Stearns, A. F. Parsons, W. B. Hargreaves, C. M. Cobb, M. Durfee, A. W. Jansen, Mason Gregg, Charles Keith, Geo. Semington, W. B. Cross, J. A. Keith, C. Caldwell, Frank Polk, Harry Perriman, R. Gurdy, J. J. Gillilan, Charles Traphagen, H. Ware, Dr. Teft, C. T. Brown, Geo. Brown, James Mullen, A. C. Ziemer, C. D. Pitcher, W. E. Hardy, Geo. K. Brown, W. G. Lewis, C. L. Trevitt, Lawrence Heiskell, W. L. Pickett, W. H. Traver, A. B. Smith, F. S. Johnson, C. F. Barnard, J. G. White, A. H. Buckstaff, W. R. Dennis, C. D. Hagerman, J. A. Gass.

New members were afterwards elected as follows: 1886—William Brown, J. R. Lemist, J. W. McDonald, E. E. Bennett, R. K. Cooper, J.